WEST LAWN DRAINAGE PROJECT

Have you noticed unusual activity on St. Luke’s West Lawn during the past two weeks? This sustainable project will capture and move storm water and sump pump outflow away from our building’s foundation and disperse it in an environmentally friendly and code-compliant manner. Proposed by the Green Team and sponsored by the Operations and Management Cabinet, the project was designed by Carol Becker of Sage Advice Landscape Design (who also designed our front garden) and executed by Cityscape Landscape and volunteers led by Jeff Greve. The Weinke family generously made available several pieces of specialized equipment for use on the project.

A major feature is the rain garden that will handle over 50% of the outflow by holding it in an engineered garden bed and slowly releasing it into the surrounding soil and air. The garden is already planted with attractive native sedges and shrubs that tolerate wet locations and move moisture into the air by transpiration. Native Illinois plants do this so well because their roots extend as deep as 12 to 15 feet. These plants also provide food, shelter and reproductive space for insects and birds.

The shrubs we planted are black chokeberry, a great small shrub for birds, especially in the fall when the berries are ripe. Adjacent to the garden and closer to the building, we installed two other native shrubs that are hosts to beneficial insects -- oakleaf hydrangea, the largest hydrangea native to Illinois, and Brandywine viburnum, a large shrub whose great fall color is visible right now.

Grass-like sedges, a common wetland plant, are placed around the perimeter to hold the rain garden edges in place as the plants become established. We’ve also planted a few iris, but most of the wildflowers appropriate for a rain garden will be added when they become available next spring. We can all enjoy watching this garden fill in over the next two summers. It will achieve its mature appearance by the summer of 2020.

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